

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The amendments set out above and the following remarks are believed responsive to the points raised by the Office Action dated March 23, 2009. In view of the amendments set out above and the following remarks, reconsideration is respectfully requested.

The Pending Claims

Claims 10 and 11 have been canceled, claims 1-9, 12, and 13, remain pending, and claim 14 has been added.

Claim 1 has been amended, and claim 14 has been added, to describe the invention more clearly. No new matter has been added, the basis for the amended claim language may be found within the original specification, claims and drawings.

Claim 1 is supported at, for example, page 21, lines 7-10 and 23-26. Claim 14 is supported at, for example, page 21, lines 2-6 and 21-23. Entry of the above is respectfully requested.

Rejection under 35 USC 103(a)

Claims 1-9 and 12-13 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 5,167,809 to Mann (hereinafter referred to as "Mann '809") in view of U.S. Patent 6,736,974 to Mann (hereinafter referred to as "Mann '974").

This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Office Action states, in view of the sentence bridging columns 3 and 4 in Mann '809, that the "piston may be lowered through the bottom end of the column and hence permits access to the piston."

There is no suggestion in Mann '809 of providing an access spacing between the second end of the tube and a second end cell structure and advancing the piston from a first end of a column tube toward a second end to allow it to be exposed at the open bottom end of the cylinder such that maintenance of the exposed piston portion is carried out. Mann '809 teaches that once the piston is lowered through the bottom end of the column it remains

surrounded by the container 20, and "piston 11 will have to be retracted before the container 20 can be removed" (col. 4, lines 5-6). There is no teaching or suggestion of providing access spacing between the second end of the column tube and a second end cell structure and exposing the advanced piston portion at the open second end of the column, and in fact, Mann '809 merely teaches that after the container 20 is removed, the piston is kept in the retracted position, bottom end cap 5 is replaced, and clamp 21 is fastened to hold the bottom end cap 5 in place (column 4, lines 12-13).

For this reason alone, reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

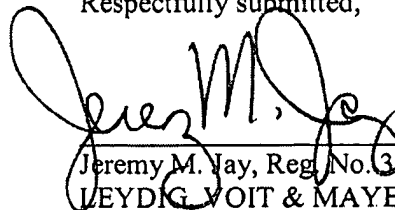
Moreover, there is no teaching or suggestion in Mann '809 and/or Mann '974 of "moving a safety plate and blocking movement of the second end of the column tube toward the second end cell structure to further maintain the access spacing" (claim 1 as amended) or including "moving guide rods having projecting stops limiting the height to which the second end of the column tube can be separated from the second end cell structure" (claim 14).

For these additional reasons, reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

If, in the opinion of the Examiner, a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of the subject application, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,



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Date: 22 May 2009

JMJ/jj